



News Release

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The Air Out There

School Air Quality Study Helps Schools and Families Play it Safe During Inversions

(Salt Lake City, UT) - Hawthorne Elementary has teamed up with Utah Department's of Health (UDOH), Environmental Quality (UDEQ) and the University of Utah for a second year to study air quality and its effects on children's respiratory health.

Starting today, December 5, the "Hawthorne Health Project" kicks off its second year of study whereby indoor/outdoor air quality data will be collected by the UDOH and UDEQ through March 2006. In addition, approximately 60 students will participate in pulmonary testing to study how indoor and outdoor air quality affects respiratory health.

The study is expected to provide additional scientific support for air quality guidance released September 2004 to assist school administrators and parents in determining when it is better for children to be indoors.

"This project really is to assist school nurses, school officials and parents make wise decisions for their students with respiratory diseases, by giving them excellent guidance that school officials, local health departments, and the Utah Departments of Health and Environmental Quality developed over a year ago," said Nicole Frei, MD, co-investigator for the project through the University of Utah.

Patricia Rhose, Hawthorne Elementary Principal, is pleased that her school has the opportunity to continue in a project that could have reaching effects around the state.

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“The issue of air quality is of great interest to both the medical and educational communities. The safety of students is a primary concern for parents and school personnel and the outcomes will benefit students, parents and administrators across the state,” Rhose said.

Last winter’s indoor/outdoor air quality monitoring at Hawthorne revealed that indoor air quality is almost three times better than outdoor air quality during inversions, due to the HVAC (heating, ventilation and air condition) systems that filter out air pollution that that can make breathing so difficult for more than 61,000 Utah school children.

For a parent of a 7-year-old student with asthma at Hawthorne, using the guidance and watching the daily air quality is all part of the family’s strategy to improve asthma control. “I check the air quality every morning before she goes to school,” comments one parent, “we’ve done it for years because asthma runs in the family and we know how it affects us. Working with the school and the new guidance has also helped, but it means sometimes my daughter goes outside and sometimes she doesn’t.”

A copy of “*Guidance for Schools: When to schedule indoor rather than outdoor activities based on the air quality in your communities*” and air quality fact sheets are available at www.health.utah.gov/asthma/guidance.html or by calling the Health Resource Line at 1-888-222-2542. The guidance and fact sheet include instructions for both parents and school officials and suggests that parents contact the schools if they wish for their children to be kept indoors when the Air Quality Index is high. Parents can check the AQI daily at www.cleanair.utah.gov

Individuals interested in learning more about air monitoring in Utah can contact Bob Dalley at DEQ’s Air Monitoring Center at 801-887-0762.

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